

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEW MEXICO**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

*Plaintiff,*

v.

**Civ. No. 19-1107**

\$8,951.00 IN UNITED STATES CURRENCY,

*Defendant-in-rem.*

**VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE *IN REM***

Plaintiff, the United States of America, brings this Verified Complaint in accordance with Rule G(2) of the Supplemental Rules for Certain Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions, and alleges as follows:

**NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1. This is a civil action to forfeit and condemn to the use and benefit of the United States of America property involved in violations of the Controlled Substances Act and 18 U.S.C. § 1952 that is subject to forfeiture pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6) and 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C).

**DEFENDANT *IN REM***

2. The Defendant *in rem* consists of the following:

a. Eight thousand, nine hundred and fifty-one dollars (\$8,951.00) in United States Currency,  
(hereafter referred to as “Defendant Currency”).

3. Defendant Currency was seized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (“ATF”) on August 2, 2019, in the District of New Mexico.

4. Defendant Currency is now, and during the pendency of this action will be, in the jurisdiction of this Court.

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

5. The United States District Court for the District of New Mexico has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1345, 1355(a) and 1356.

6. Venue for this civil forfeiture action is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1355 and 1395, as acts or omissions giving rise to the forfeiture took place in this district and the property is found in this district. Upon the filing of this complaint, Defendant Currency will be arrested by execution of a Warrant for Arrest *In Rem* in the District of New Mexico.

**FACTS**

7. On August 1, 2019, at approximately 01:45 a.m., Las Cruces Police Department (“LCPD”) Officer A. Tuton was patrolling the area of Alameda and Picacho in Las Cruces, New Mexico, which is located within the District of New Mexico.

8. Officer Tuton initiated a vehicle stop on a GMC Yukon bearing Texas license plate 11G772 after the vehicle failed to turn on its blinker as it made a left turn. Officer Tuton ran the license plate, and discovered it was fictitious.

9. Upon approaching the vehicle, Officer Tuton identified the driver as Mark Sanchez. Sanchez stated that his identification was in a black bag in the front of the vehicle.

10. Officer Tuton noticed the odor of marijuana emanating from the bag, and Sanchez freely admitted to having marijuana in the bag. When asked by Officer Tuton, Sanchez advised that he did not have a medical marijuana card.

11. Officer Tuton issued Sanchez a traffic citation for driving with a suspended license and advised Sanchez that the GMC Yukon would be towed.

12. Before the GMC Yukon was towed, Officer Tuton performed an inventory search of the vehicle. During that search, Officer Tuton discovered a pistol with the serial number obliterated, in violation of federal law.

13. After encountering the pistol, Officer Tuton obtained a state search warrant for the vehicle. Pursuant to that search warrant, Officer Tuton discovered additional contraband, to include a suspected explosive device and a large quantity of currency.

14. ATF Special Agents (“SAs”) arrived on scene and took custody of all weapons, ammunition, explosives, and currency. ATF also took custody of Sanchez, who they transported to the Las Cruces ATF office.

15. While at the ATF office, SA D. King and Task Force Officer M. Rickards interviewed Sanchez, who stated that the \$8,951.00 in United States currency (“Defendant Currency”) that agents had seized belonged to him. Sanchez explained that he collected drug debts for Arturo LNU<sup>1</sup> across the United States, to include debts in Kansas City, Kansas, Wichita, Kansas, and St. Louis, Missouri.

16. Sanchez admitted that he assumed Arturo LNU to be a cartel member, and specified that the debts he collected related to the sale of marijuana by Arturo LNU.

17. Sanchez related that on these collection trips, which would last between two and four days, he would pick up between twenty and thirty thousand dollars from drug debtors. From these amounts, Sanchez would be paid two to three thousand dollars per trip.

18. Sanchez readily admitted that Defendant Currency belonged to him, and that he had saved the money from his employment collecting drug debts.

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<sup>1</sup> LNU is a common law enforcement acronym for “last name unknown.”

**FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

19. The United States incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 18 as though fully set forth.

20. Title 21, United States Code, Section 881(a)(6) subjects to forfeiture “[a]ll moneys, negotiable instruments, securities, or other things of value furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance or listed chemical in violation of this subchapter, all proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and all moneys, negotiable instruments, and securities used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of this subchapter.”

21. Defendant Currency was furnished, or intended to be furnished, in exchange for a controlled substance, or constitutes proceeds traceable to such an exchange, or was used or intended to be used to facilitate a violation of the Controlled Substances Act and is thus subject to forfeiture to the United States pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6).

**SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

22. The United States incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 18 as though fully set forth.

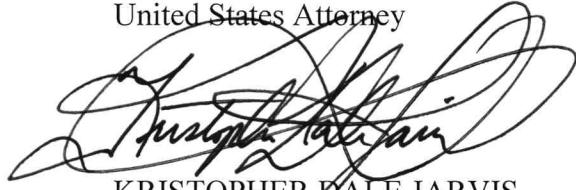
23. 18 U.S.C. § 1952 prohibits interstate and foreign travel or transportation with the intent to (1) distribute the proceeds of any unlawful activity; (2) commit any crime of violence to further any unlawful activity; or (3) otherwise promote, manage, establish, carry on, or facilitate the promotion, management, establishment, or carrying on, of any unlawful activity. Unlawful activity is defined in 18 U.S.C. § 1952(b).

24. Defendant Currency is the proceeds of a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1952 or is the proceeds traceable to such property and, is thus subject to forfeiture to the United States pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff seeks arrest of Defendant Currency and forfeiture of same to Plaintiff, determination of the validity and priority of claims of the Claimants and any Unknown Claimants to the Defendant Currency, costs and expenses of seizure and of this proceeding, and other proper relief.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN C. ANDERSON  
United States Attorney



KRISTOPHER DALE JARVIS  
STEPHEN R. KOTZ  
Assistant United States Attorneys  
200 N. Church St.  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
(575) 522-2304

**28 U.S.C. § 1746 DECLARATION**

I am a Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives who has read the contents of the Complaint for Forfeiture *In Rem* to which this Declaration is attached; and the statements contained in the complaint are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I declare under penalty of perjury and the laws of the United States of America that this Declaration is true and correct, except as to matters stated on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

Dated: 11/25/19

  
Dennis King, Special Agent  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and  
Explosives

## CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS  
United States of AmericaDEFENDANTS  
\$8,951.00 in United States Currency

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff \_\_\_\_\_  
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant \_\_\_\_\_  
(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF  
THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)  
Kristopher Dale Jarvis, Assistant United States Attorney  
200 N. Church Street, Las Cruces, NM 88001  
575-522-2304

## II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 U.S. Government Defendant	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

## III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

	PTF	DEF	PTF	DEF	
Citizen of This State	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Citizen of Another State	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Foreign Nation	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

## IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> 120 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 130 Miller Act <input type="checkbox"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> 151 Medicare Act <input type="checkbox"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) <input type="checkbox"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits <input type="checkbox"/> 190 Other Contract <input type="checkbox"/> 195 Contract Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 196 Franchise	<b>PERSONAL INJURY</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 310 Airplane <input type="checkbox"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander <input type="checkbox"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 340 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 345 Marine Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 350 Motor Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 360 Other Personal Injury <input type="checkbox"/> 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	<b>PERSONAL INJURY</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 367 Health Care/ Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 370 Other Fraud <input type="checkbox"/> 371 Truth in Lending <input type="checkbox"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage <input type="checkbox"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 <input type="checkbox"/> 690 Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 <input type="checkbox"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 <b>PROPERTY RIGHTS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 820 Copyrights <input type="checkbox"/> 830 Patent <input type="checkbox"/> 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application <input type="checkbox"/> 840 Trademark
<input type="checkbox"/> 210 Land Condemnation <input type="checkbox"/> 220 Foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment <input type="checkbox"/> 240 Torts to Land <input type="checkbox"/> 245 Tort Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 290 All Other Real Property	<b>REAL PROPERTY</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 440 Other Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 441 Voting <input type="checkbox"/> 442 Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 443 Housing/ Accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other <input type="checkbox"/> 448 Education	<b>CIVIL RIGHTS</b> <b>Habeas Corpus:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 463 Alien Detainee <input type="checkbox"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence <input type="checkbox"/> 530 General <input type="checkbox"/> 535 Death Penalty <b>Other:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 540 Mandamus & Other <input type="checkbox"/> 550 Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 555 Prison Condition <input type="checkbox"/> 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement	<b>PRISONER PETITIONS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 791 Employee Retirement Income Security Act	<b>LABOR</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 710 Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="checkbox"/> 720 Labor/Management Relations <input type="checkbox"/> 740 Railway Labor Act <input type="checkbox"/> 751 Family and Medical Leave Act <input type="checkbox"/> 790 Other Labor Litigation
			<b>SOCIAL SECURITY</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 861 HIA (1395ff) <input type="checkbox"/> 862 Black Lung (923) <input type="checkbox"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) <input type="checkbox"/> 864 SSID Title XVI <input type="checkbox"/> 865 RSI (405(g))	<b>FEDERAL TAX SUITS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) <input type="checkbox"/> 871 IRS-Third Party 26 USC 7609 <b>IMMIGRATION</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 462 Naturalization Application <input type="checkbox"/> 465 Other Immigration Actions

## V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 Original Proceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Removed from State Court	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Remanded from Appellate Court	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Reinstated or Reopened	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Transferred from Another District (specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File
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Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):  
21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6) and 18 U.S.C. § 981(a)(1)(C)

## VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Brief description of cause:

## VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.      DEMAND \$ \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:  
JURY DEMAND:  Yes  No

## VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCKET NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

DATE

11/26/2019

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_

MAG. JUDGE \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIPT # \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT \_\_\_\_\_

APPLYING IFP \_\_\_\_\_